

REMARKS

During a telephonic interview conducted on February 4, 2003, the Examiner suggested that the independent claims be amended to more particularly define the structure of the claimed handgrips and their relative location on the bar so as to further distinguish the claimed invention from conventional handgrips that are incidently mounted to center of gravity of a bar.

By the present amendment, independent claims 1 and 8 have been amended to further define such structure.

More specifically, claims 1 and 8 have been amended to clarify that the handgrips each have a single mounting portion that is in direct contact with the bar at a point located substantially at a center of gravity of a sum of a mass of the respective handgrip and a mass of a portion of the bar extending between the fixing point and a respective one of the distal ends of the bar.

Claims 1 and 8 have been further amended to recite that the mounting portions of the respective handgrips are located at positions of the bar at which vibrations transmitted to the bar from the motor through the operation rod are minimized.

Accordingly, independent claims 1 and 8 recite handgrips having a single mounting portion in direct contact

with a bar substantially at the claimed center of gravity of a sum of the masses of the bar and the handgrips, and claim 8 further recites that the respective handgrips each have plurality of escape portions formed in a remaining portion of the handgrip so as to keep the remaining portion out of contact with the bar to suppress transmission of vibration from the bar to the handgrip.

Dependent claims 2, 6, 7 and 9 have been amended to maintain consistency with the amended base claims.

New claims 14-17 have also been added and include independent claim 14 and dependent claims 15-17. Independent claim 14 contains the subject matter of amended independent claims 1 and 8 and further contains the subject matter of dependent claims 2 and 6-7.

Specifically, claim 14 recites not only that the handgrips have mounting portions in direct contact with the bar substantially at the claimed center of gravity, but further recites that the handgrips each have a plurality of escape portions that are not in contact with the bar to reduce vibration transmitted from the bar to the handgrip. Claim 14 further recites the structure of each handgrip as comprising an elongated hollow body in which a respective one of the distal end portions of the bar is received, the elongated hollow body having an inner circumferential surface facing an

outer circumferential surface of the bar, the inner circumferential surface having a first portion held in contact with the outer circumferential surface of a part of the respective distal end portion of the bar and forming the mounting portion of the handgrip and a second portion extending contiguously from the first portion in a longitudinal direction of the elongated hollow body and being out of contact with the circumferential surface of a remaining part of the distal end portion of the bar, the second portion of the inner circumferential surface having a plurality of annular ribs projecting from the inner circumferential surface of the handgrip and spaced from one another in the longitudinal direction of the hollow body, the annular ribs having distal ends spaced from the outer circumferential surface of the distal end portion of the bar and forming the escape portions of the handgrip.

Applicants respectfully submit that amended independent claims 1 and 8, newly added independent claim 14, and dependent claims 2-7, 9-13 and 15-17 patentably distinguish over the prior art of record.

The cited reference to Ballas discloses a handle assembly 21 comprised of a bar connected to a center of gravity of a vegetation cutting apparatus. However, Ballas does not disclose or suggest handgrips mounted substantially

at a center of gravity of a sum of a mass of the respective handgrip and a portion of the bar extending between the fixing point and the distal end of the bar. This can be seen from a cursory examination of Fig. 2 of Ballas, which reveals that the handgrips 26, 29 are mounted significantly behind a center of gravity of the sum of the masses of the heavy metal bar portions 22, 23 and the lightweight rubber handgrips 26, 29.

Amended independent claims 1 and 8 require that the handgrips each have a mounting portion that is fixedly mounted to the bar at a point located substantially at a center of gravity of a sum of a mass of the respective handgrip and a mass of a portion of the bar extending between the fixing point and a respective one of the distal ends of the bar. Claims 1 and 8 further require that the mounting portions of the respective handgrips are located at positions of the bar at which vibrations transmitted to the bar from the motor through the operation rod are minimized.

Claim 14 contains similar requirements and further recites that the handgrips have elongated hollow bodies having inner circumferential surfaces having a first portion held in contact with a respective distal end portion of the bar and forming the mounting portion of the handgrip and a second portion extending contiguously from the first portion and being out of contact with the remaining part of the distal end

portion of the bar, the second portion having a plurality of annular ribs projecting therefrom and being spaced from one another and having distal ends spaced from the outer circumferential surface of the distal end portion of the bar and forming the escape portions of the handgrip.

Ballas fails to disclose or suggest any of the foregoing structure recited by amended independent claims 1 and 8 and newly added independent claim 14.

Neither Steere nor Higashi cures the foregoing defects. Steere discloses handgrips discloses substantially behind the center of gravity recited in claims 1, 8 and 14. Higashi discloses a bush cutting machine 10 having a pipe-shaped operation rod 15, an engine 13 mounted to a proximal end of the operation rod, a transmission shaft 16 extending through the operation rod 15 and driven by the engine 13, a cutting tool 14 provided at a distal end of the operation rod 15 and rotated by the drive shaft 16, a bar-shaped handle 17 fixed to an arbitrary position of the operation rod 15 between the prime mover 13 and the cutter 14, and a right grip 20 and a left grip 18 mounted to distal ends of the handle 17.

However, Higashi does not disclose or suggest mounting of the handgrips in a position substantially at the claimed center of gravity.

Accordingly, applicants respectfully submit that claims 1-17 patentably distinguish over the prior art of record and that the anticipatory and obviousness rejections should be withdrawn.

In view of the foregoing amendments and discussion, the application is now believed to be in condition for allowance. Accordingly, favorable reconsideration and allowance of the claims are most respectfully requested.

Respectfully submitted,

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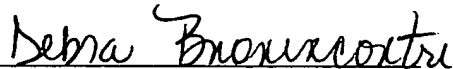
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February 9, 2004